

Finding the Crescent Moon

2023

Once upon a time, not very long ago and not very far away there was a little brother and sister. One sunny spring day they skipped into the garden over the stepping stones. Much to their delight they found auntie and uncle sitting under the pomegranate tree! Auntie and uncle scooped the children up in their arms and gave them warm hugs, “we have come for a special visit, find a comfy and shady place under the tree”, they said, “for we have a story for you” and this is how it began...

Once upon a time a long time ago and far far away there was a baby boy born into a rich and prosperous family. Two months before he was born however, sadness came to the family and his father died. It was then his grandfather who gave him the name Muhammed, which means “praiseworthy.” As was the custom of the time, his mother took him into the desert to be raised by a nurse, Halima, until he was five years old. It was thought that the open air would make a child strong and healthy. Halima recognized in him that he was good and true.

As soon as he could walk he was a helper to the desert shepherds, tending their flocks of sheep and goats. He could neither read nor write, and did not go to school, and instead studied with the hard working people in the world around him.

When he was six years old his mother died and he went to live with his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib who was a wise leader of his people. Muhammed sat at his grandfather’s side for two years, observing intently as his grandfather gave council to the people who came to him for advice and help. His grandfather loved him and thought he would be a great leader one day.

When Muhammed was eight years old his dear grandfather died. Muhammed then went to live with his uncle, Abu Talib who was a merchant, buying, trading and selling things. Muhammed traveled with his uncle, driving camels for great distances, meeting new people and seeing new places.

Muhammed was troubled by how he saw rich people treat poor people, and how in business matters people might cheat and take an unfair portion for themselves.

Because of his sincerity, sense of fairness and honesty he was called, "al-Amin" which means "the trustworthy". People came to him, to ask him to settle matters.

Because of these remarkable qualities Khadijah, a beautiful and wealthy widow 15 years older than him, asked him to work as her agent in trade. He proved himself to be kind, polite and mature and when he was twenty-five Khadijah asked him to marry her. Their life together was happy and they were blessed with two sons and four daughters. They were equal partners and respected each other and always helped each other.

Muhammed went often to the mountains, just outside the city where he sat quietly in a cave for hours. One night in the month of Ramadan an angel visited him who gave him the message of goodness and true happiness. He did not have a pen and paper and yet he was able to memorize all that the angel's said by heart.

He went home and told Khadijah. She did not think him crazy and rather believed what he said of the angel visiting him with a message. For the next twenty three years the angel visited him until the message was complete. This was called the Koran. Which taught that all people must be treated with respect - women and men, rich and poor, all people. This is how the religion of Islam began, if someone is Islamic we can also say that they are, "Muslim".

Some did not like Muhammad's words of justice, and a fierce and powerful lord charged through the streets waving his sword to find Muhammed and kill him. People hid in alarm but one neighbor told the lord to go to his sister's house before trying to kill Muhammed. In his sister's house he heard words from the Koran being recited and his heart softened and the fierce warrior began to cry. He found Muhammaed and accepted his religion of Islam.

There were more and more followers but many rich and powerful leaders did not like Muhammed's message of goodness, justice and truth. So one night Muhammed and his followers left their city by camel, horseback and foot. Enemies who wanted him dead followed after him.

That night Muhammed hid with his friend Abu Bakr in a cave and a spider spun a web over the entrance and a dove made a nest near the cave's opening. When

the soldiers rode by they saw a spider's web and unbroken dove's nest and turned away. Surely no one could be inside? Muhammed was saved.

Muhammed then made his way to the city of Medina where he and his followers were welcomed with children singing from the tops of palm trees. Everyone wanted him to stay in their home. So Muhammed let his camel decide. The camel chose a humble house for them to rest. The people from the old village Mecca had nothing. The people of the new village, Medina gave them half their belongings thus creating an inseparable bond of old friends and new working together as one.

Muhammed died in the city of Medina after having given all his earthly possessions to the poor. Today we can look at the Crescent moon to remember his message of goodness, truth and kindness he received from the angel during the holy time of Ramadan.

Dear children, this is the story that auntie and uncle told the children that day under the pomegranate tree, they then said, "Tonight is a special night! We will go and look for the crescent moon. If we see it, we will know that Ramadan has begun!"

That evening the whole family put on their warm coats and hats, and staying up later than brother and sister's bedtime, they walked up the big hill behind their home. The eucalyptus trees were rustling in the evening breezes. Clouds drifted in the sky and at the top of the hill there were other friends also there. A night owl hooted and the clouds parted, lo and behold, the crescent moon peeped out. Ramadan had begun!

That month, for 30 moons, the crescent would grow fat, and then thin again, back to a sliver. During this month all the grown ups would wake before Father Sun rose to eat, drink and pray. The children had their own prayer mats to pray alongside them. The grown ups wouldn't eat or drink all day until Father Sun had gone to bed. Children and the sick and elderly would eat though throughout the day.

During the month of Ramadan they also did extra nice things for other people. Brother and sister thought what they could do, they thought of cooking food for a neighbor with no house, they picked up trash at the beach, and they swept the sidewalk for the grandpa who lived next door who could no longer walk.

At the end of Ramadan it was Eid al Fitr. For Eid they put on their best clothes, and more aunties and uncles came. It was so lively and joyful! The first thing they ate was a sweet juicy date. They all cooked special food and for three days straight had a party!

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*Collected from kind class parents who generously shared their personal stories which were compiled here, the parents proofread the first draft and here is the story of the brother and sister today.

*Muhammed's biography is drawn from the book, "Muhammed" by Demi, 2003.